

COUNTRY Italy
SUBJECT The South Tirolean Volkspartei and the ASAR of the Trentino
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SUPPLEMENT

1. Secret negotiations are said to be taking place between the SVP and the ASAR (the autonomous movement in the Trentino) concerning possible collaboration between the South Tirol and the Trentino.
2. It is reported that proposals by the ASAR for joint autonomy between the South Tirol and the Trentino were unanimously rejected at the meeting of the SVP leaders in Bolzano on 4 October. Following this meeting the ASAR representatives are said to have been received rather coolly when, on several occasions, they visited Bolzano and sought to persuade the SVP leaders to consider a joint autonomy solution. They were told in no uncertain terms that while the South Tiroleans had the greatest sympathy for the Trentinians and their aspirations for autonomy they would not consider any step which might prejudice the chances of obtaining separate autonomy for the South Tirol.
3. At the same time the less nationalistic of the SVP leaders have apparently felt all along that some form of collaboration with the Trentino would be in the interest of the South Tirol. They are reported to have argued as follows:
 - (a) that the existence of an autonomous territory between South Tirol and Italy proper would be an advantage to them;
 - (b) that the friendship and support of the people of the Trentino would be invaluable to them, especially in a) checking Italian emigration to the South Tirol and b) replacing a large percentage of local Italian officials with South Tiroleans. On both of these points the Trentinians feel as strongly as the South Tiroleans;
 - (c) that close collaboration between the two provinces was desirable from certain economic viewpoints, such as the exploitation of local water power, etc;
 - (d) that the enmity of the people of the Trentino, on the other hand, would considerably weaken their position;

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and such enmity could be expected if, as the result of the stubborn and negative attitude of the South Tiroleans, the Trentino failed to acquire autonomy.

In view of these considerations the SVP finally agreed with the ASAR representatives to consider the possibility of some form of collaboration between the two provinces. To this end a Committee has been set up, comprising two SVP representatives, two ASAR representatives, and one Ladin representative.

4. On 26 October 1946, the SVP members of this Committee handed over to the ASAR representatives the "Draft Supplementary provisions" to be incorporated in the autonomy statute of the two provinces. These provisions are now being considered by the ASAR leaders. They have also been handed by the SVP to the Italian Christian Democratic Party in Trentino.

5. The SVP leaders who initiated these negotiations include Drs. Raffeiner and Ebner, the SVP Chairman Erich Amonn, and to a lesser extent Dr. Tinzl.

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(~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ Comment: It should be stressed that all these people are as convinced as their more nationalistic colleagues of the necessity that South Tirol should be granted its own separate autonomy, so that the ethnical frontier at the Salurn gorge shall be firmly established, and there shall be no question of the South Tiroleans becoming a minority within the autonomous territory. For this reason they would never consider a joint autonomy of the two provinces along the lines proposed by the Italians. On the other hand, in view of the considerations mentioned in paragraph 3 above, they do not exclude the possibility of some arrangement with the people of the Trentino, which will enable the latter to obtain their own autonomy and simultaneously provide for the closest collaboration between the two autonomous provinces in all matters affecting them equally.)

6. These negotiations between the SVP and ASAR are causing considerable apprehension among wide sections of the nationalistic South Tirolean peasant population, who fear they are being betrayed by business men more interested in their own personal economic prosperity than in the welfare of the South Tiroleans as a whole. Particularly alarmed are Church circles in Bressanone, headed by Archbishop Geissler. Another opponent of the negotiations is the much respected Canon Gamper of Bolzano. In his editorials in the South Tirolean newspaper, Dolomiten, Gamper has repeatedly stressed that the South Tiroleans must insist on their own separate autonomy and have nothing to do with the Trentinians. Recently Erich Amonn wrote to Gamper suggesting that these editorials were tactless and unwise. Gamper took offense at this, and has given up attending meetings of the SVP "Action Committee" - a fact which has given rise to rumors that he has resigned from the SVP.
7. Among the opponents of the negotiations there is a wide belief that Dr. Raffeiner is mainly responsible for them, and a movement is afoot to turn him out at the forthcoming elections for leading officials of the SVP.

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8. In the Office for South Tirol in Innsbruck there is a similar feeling of alarm that the SVP leaders are going dangerously far in their negotiations with the Trentiners. Especially apprehensive are nationalistic die-hards like Professor Reut-Nicolussi and Dr. Fness.
9. Meanwhile Dr. Innocenti, formerly Italian Prefect of Bolzano and now entrusted by the Italian Government with carrying on various autonomy negotiations with South Tirol, Val d'Aosta, etc., continues to maintain that the Paris Agreement of 5 September does not assure the South Tiroleans their own separate autonomy. In recent talks with Ulrich Amonn, Mrs. Haffeiner and Volgger, Innocenti has persisted in his original idea of a joint autonomy between South Tirol and Trentino.
10. Apart from the negotiations with the Trentiners, the SVP has also contacted the leaders of the Val d'Aosta. Dr. Ebner visited the French minority, and was given an enthusiastic reception. He returned to Bolzano with plans for the closest collaboration between the two minorities in the defense of their rights against the Italian Government.
11. The SVP has also been approached by the Sicilians who are anxious to form a united front of the autonomous movements in Italy.

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